

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION:

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
Date: 6/30/05

MEETING WITH CHINESE ON OCTOBER 15th 1971

VAW.

Late at night on October 14th I had a call from Tsao saying that they would like to see me the next morning. I agreed and they set 1100 as the appropriate time. At that time I went there and was received as always by them in the usual sequence and with the usual rites. Amb. Huang was not present.

They then read me a message indicating that they wished to know data concerning the transmitter we would use while Dr. Kissinger's aircraft was on the ground in Peking. They read me the following message.

The Chinese side agrees to the use of a communicator/engineer for purposes of direct communication with Washington during Dr. Kissinger's visit to Peking.

The transmitter will be used every two hours on even days.

The Chinese side would like to know the power, call sign, frequencies and method of operation and type of radio transmission.

I said that I would pass this on to Washington and would try and get the answers before 18 October as they had requested.

We then passed on to Chit chat. They asked me about the role of U.S. Military in politics. I pointed out that we had none, had to resign to run for office, could not make political statements or attend any political meeting in Uniform. We could vote but a law prohibited any military person from being Secretary of Defense or of the Army Navy and Airforce. They looked at me in bewilderment and asked me to repeat this to make sure that they had heard right. I repeated. They then said what about General Eisenhower. I assured them that he had resigned from his five stars before he ran for President and they wanted to know why. I said that this was the way the U.S. operated.

We then spoke about the racial question in the United States. I pointed out that we had a Japanese, a Chinese, a Black and a Spanish Speaking Senator. That the Chief of Personnel of the U.S. Army in Europe was a black Major General, that the Ambassador to Sweden was black, so was the Under Secretary of Transportation. That Senator Brooke was elected in a state that had only 5% of blacks among its population. All of this was done somewhat less abruptly than recorded here, adding that there were still injustices but we were aware of them and trying to correct them. They appeared surprised at the foregoing and some statistics concerning the income of black families in the U.S. I then mentioned that the Chinese ethnic community was perhaps the most law abiding in the United States. Wei laughed and said that they had plenty of crime in China (!!!) I felt it better not to ask whether it was political... They then asked about intermarriage with Vietnamese. I said that there had been some but perhaps less than in Japan.

Both said that a great effort to learn English was afoot in China, they realized that they needed this to communicate with the world. Tsao added that Chairman Mao was personally studying English. He could not really speak it but could understand it to some degree. Tsao added that Edgar Snow had met Ambassador Huang in Yenan.

Tsao and Wei chuckled over the fact that nearly everyone thought that the contacts between the U.S. and China were being handled in Ottawa.

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Wei said that he had read in the paper that many journalists were watching the Chinese and American Embassies there to see if they could detect how the connection was made. They said that it was well to be discreet in the delicate stage of Chinese American relations. They knew that the opening of the dialogue with China had not been easy for Mr. Nixon because of internal opposition in the United States. I said that Mr. Nixon was a courageous man who would not be deterred from doing what he thought was right by opposition. They nodded agreement.

I said that returning to the question of the role of the U.S. Military in U.S. Politics. I must tell them a story of a conversation I had had with one of my Russian colleagues. He had told me that I did not really live in a democracy and when I asked him why he had replied "You are an officer in the Army but you cannot hold political office, whereas I am an officer in the Soviet Navy but I can be a member of the Supreme Soviet". To which I had replied "But I still have an advantage over you, I can join the opposition and you cannot." Both Tsao and Wei threw back their heads and roared with laughter.

Both shovelled out soft soap to me. How frank I was, how much they enjoyed talking to me etc. By this time the jasmine tea was almost coming out of my ears, and one more preserved apple and I would start growing blossoms. Great cordiality and many apologies for the absence of the Ambassador.

They then asked me what I had thought about China before I had met them. I said that I had met few (relatively) Chinese before them but that those I had met had lived up to their reputation as a cultured, industrious, hard working people, who had given the world some of its greatest discoveries. I added "You gave us some good things like the compass and printing and some bad things like gunpowder and rockets." They laughed and obviously enjoyed the exchange. They expressed the hope that I would visit China. I said it was important that as people we get to know one another. One always dislikes what is unknown. They agreed rather solemnly.

With further expressions of mutual goodwill and esteem I made my way out in accordance with the usual ceremonial.

Kenn Swartz
My Gen. USAmy